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THE SUMMIT IN GENEVA

Text of Weinberger's Letter

Pledge 'Could Make It Difficult...to Make Up for [Soviet] Violations'

Nov. 13, 1985

Dear Mr. President:

On June 10, 1985, when you announced that the U.S. would go "the extra mile" to give the U.S.S.R. time to correct its treaty violations, you asked us, in National Security Decision Directive 173, to give you an analysis of Soviet violations of arms control and other treaties. You also asked me to recommend incentives we might provide to the Soviets to correct their violations and, should such corrective action not be forthcoming, to effect appropriate and proportionate responses to those violations.

I am attaching Part One of this report you requested, together with an executive summary covering its main points. The report's principal conclusion is that Soviet violations are continuing and require an appropriate and proportionate response on our part. The Joint Chiefs generally feel that your Strategic Modernization Program, as announced by you in October 1981, and the conventional and readiness improvements requested in your budgets would constitute the "appropriate and proportionate response" if fully funded by the Congress. I tend to agree with this opinion but, of course, Congress has made many cuts in your requests.

The Soviet violations put us in a particularly vulnerable and dangerous position when these violations are compared with the sharp reductions in our requests for Strategic Defense [Initiative] funding. We all feel that it is essential to move as rapidly and effectively as possible on SDI because Soviet violations do give them an advantage which makes it very difficult for us to maintain a deterrence balance with them.

Of course, their violations also constitute a powerful argument for getting the deepest possible cuts in nuclear arms by agreement, if we can secure agreements that bring us to parity at these lower levels and are thoroughly verifiable. Also, as we approach budget time for next year we may want to consider

a supplemental for this year or more than 3 percent growth next year to compensate in specific ways for these violations. We will present to you on your return from Geneva a range of options for appropriate responses. I will be glad to take up with you the responses we can make within various classified programs.

If I may be permitted, I would like to mention a few other points here:

In Geneva, you will almost certainly come under great pressure to do three things that would limit severely your options for responding to Soviet violations:

- One is to agree to continue to observe SALT II.

- The second is to agree formally to limit SDI research, development, and testing to only that research allowed under the most restrictive interpretation of the ABM treaty, even though you have determined that a less restrictive interpretation is justified legally. The Soviets doubtless will seek assurances that you will continue to be bound to such tight limits on SDI development and testing that would discourage the Congress from making any but token appropriations.

- Third, the Soviets may propose a communique or other language that obscures their record of arms control violations by referring to the "importance that both sides attach to compliance."

Any or all of these Soviet proposals, if agreed to, would sharply restrict the range of responses to past and current Soviet violations available to us. A pledge to continue to adhere to SALT II, even though the Soviets are violating it, could make it difficult, if not impossible, to do other things we should do to make up for their violations. We can, of course, continue to observe parts of SALT II, at your option, but a pledge to continue observing it all, could put rigid constraints on your ability to respond to Soviet violations.

Also, such a pledge would require us to dismantle far larger numbers of modern weapons than the Soviets over the near-term. (See pages 1-4 of the attached Annex A. This annex indicates the dramatic disparity between our respective dismantling requirements. Essentially, the U.S. would have to dismantle between 1,320 and 2,240 MIRVed [multiple independently targetable reentry vehicles] ballistic missile warheads by 1991, whereas the Soviets would have to dismantle only about 558 ballistic missiles, of which just 112 would be MIRV systems. Because Soviet modernization processes can go on, the net effect would be thousands of additional U.S.S.R. warheads by the early 1990s.)

Any agreement to limit the SDI program according to a narrow (and, I believe, wrong) interpretation of the ABM treaty—a treaty which the Soviets are violating under any interpretation—would diminish significantly the prospects that we will succeed in bringing our search for a strategic defense to fruition.

Communique or other language that enables the Soviets to appear equally committed to full compliance—even as they continue to enlarge their pattern of violations—will make the difficult task of responding to those violations even more problematic.

Geneva offers the opportunity to underline the importance we attach to strict compliance with arms control agreements previously made. And it will help to build the foundation on which any proportionate response must be based.